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Dear Congressmen and Congresswomen,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my view on U.S.-Cuba Policy.

The U.S. Embargo began after the USSR delivered nuclear weapons in Cuba. The people of the world were polarized by the dialogue of the two super powers. The weapons were removed and the Embargo has evolved to become a policy to encourage the adoption of democracy on the island of Cuba. U.S. citizens are able to travel to and trade with the former USSR, and even other countries deemed to be less democratic than we are. The Cuban Embargo, for me, is a remnant of the intense emotions of the 1960's and needs to change.

Decades ago, President Nixon dared to engage Communist China. They have become a large trading partner. The spirit of Americans and the engagement of others, albeit conflicted at times, seems to deliver betterment for those involved.

Will opening up travel and trade with Cuba advance U.S. economic objectives? Agricultural sales have increased since relaxing restrictions in the year 2000. Leadership from U.S. corporations have expressed interest, even proposing that they would like to explore the opportunities. Examples include air service (CEO Bob Fornaro, Air Tran), Minnesota's Medtronic would like to sell medical devices, and Carlson Companies, travel services. These activities include expansion of jobs and customer bases, and more interaction.

Will opening up travel and trade advance efforts for democracy and human rights in Cuba? The determination and evaluation of this is in the future. Imagine U.S. travelers engaging the people, buying meals, hotel visits, art to bring home, having dialogues. The resources shared, intellectual, social, financial, give the people more voice. Just like here in the U.S., the people with more resources have more voice.

Opening up travel and trade with Cuba, seems to have more upside and opportunity for more people than the current restrictions that benefit the few involved. As my dear friend Anya Achtenberg has said "The ability to interact face to face, is so profoundly central to how we flourish and develop a voice in their society....that we cannot ignore this any longer." Let's allow more interaction, more voice.

Our great country was founded on freedoms, ideas and ideals. Democracy is not a document, it is a continuous effort to empower the people. Let's open up to the possibilities. If it is true, that one day, we will normalize our relations with the people of the country of Cuba, then let's bring the future into the present so we can do something about it. Let's go find out how a different approach will work.

You all have my my heartfelt thanks for taking a leadership role, both for your constituents back home, and our great nation, serving the people. All too often, the news reports desparaging behavior of those representing us on the Hill. My experience has been far different. Keep up the good work!

Warmly,

Craig